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Armstrong to Face Doping Charges

By VANESSA O'CONNELL and REED ALBERGOTTI



Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

The charges could cost Lance Armstrong his seven Tour de France titles.



The U.S. agency that polices drug use in sports has informed Lance Armstrong that it intends to bring formal doping charges against him. Reed Albergotti and Vanessa O'Connell have details on The News Hub. Photo: AFP/Getty Images.

The U.S. agency that polices drug use in sports has informed Lance Armstrong that it intends to bring formal doping charges against him, in an action that could ultimately cost the retired cycling champion all seven of his Tour de France titles.

In a 15-page letter reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency,

or USADA, told Mr. Armstrong and others that it spoke with "numerous riders, team personnel and others" who "will testify based on personal knowledge" of Mr. Armstrong's alleged doping.

The letter, which paints a picture of a wide-ranging conspiracy by a succession of the country's top cycling teams over a period of years, comes just months after federal prosecutors closed a two-year investigation into Mr. Armstrong's U.S. Postal Service-sponsored cycling team without bringing charges.

As a result of the USADA action, triathlon authorities suspended Mr. Armstrong from competing. The athlete, who focused on the sport after retiring from cycling in 2011, can't compete in triathlons until the charges are resolved.



Getty Images

Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong attended the 2012 Paris Roubaix cycle race in April in Paris.

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Once a trusted teammate of Lance Armstrong, Floyd Landis alleges that Armstrong's USPS cycling team was involved in an elaborate doping scheme. Simon Constable talks to WSJ's Reed Albergotti about the story. (Originally published July 2, 2010.)

Documents

[USADA notice letter against Lance Armstrong and others](#)

[Mr. Armstrong's statement in response to doping charges](#)

[June 8 letter from lawyer representing Mr. Armstrong to USADA](#)

In a statement, Mr. Armstrong said, "I have been notified that USADA, an organization largely funded by taxpayer dollars but governed only by self-written rules, intends to again dredge up discredited allegations dating back more than 16 years to prevent me from competing as a triathlete and try and strip me of the seven Tour de France victories I earned."

Mr. Armstrong added, "I have never doped."

USADA Chief Executive Travis Tygart confirmed sending the letter but declined to comment on the evidence. In a statement, he said USADA "only initiates matters supported by the evidence. We do not choose whether or not we do our job based on outside pressures, intimidation or for any reason other than the evidence."

The letter also contains accusations against five others: Johan Bruyneel, the manager of four of Mr. Armstrong's cycling teams; former team doctors Luis Garcia Del Moral and Pedro Celaya; former trainer Jose Marti; and consulting doctor Michele Ferrari. The specific charges include possession, trafficking and administration of banned performance-enhancing drugs. The former team doctors and team officials didn't respond to emails seeking comment.

Beyond the specific allegations of doping, the letter also alleges that Mr. Armstrong's cycling teams engaged in a coordinated "doping conspiracy" over many years that involved "team officials, employees, doctors, and elite cyclists of the United States Postal Service and Discovery Channel cycling teams."

It alleges that in the years following the alleged conspiracy, the people involved engaged in a coordinated coverup in which they misled antidoping authorities, and gave false statements and legal testimony under oath and worked to "intimidate, discredit, silence and retaliate against witnesses."

The letter said the conspiracy was carried out "in order to advance the athletic and sporting achievements, financial well-being and status of the teams and their riders, employees, members and investors."

A spokeswoman for Discovery Channel declined comment.

Photos: Lance Armstrong's Career



Bryn Lennon/Getty Images

The USADA charges aren't criminal charges. The agency has the power to ban athletes from competition and to revoke previous titles. Athletes who are charged by

Mr. Armstrong retained the yellow jersey after stage 8 of the Tour de France from Pforzheim, Germany, to Gerardmer, France, July 9, 2005.

Timeline: Decades of Doping



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The USADA accuses Lance Armstrong and others with involvement in a "pervasive pattern of doping" using the following prohibited substances and methods:

Erythropoietin (EPO), also known as "E," "Po," "Edgar" or "Edgar Allan Poe," among other names. EPO is used by athletes to increase the number of red blood cells in their circulatory system which are available to carry oxygen.

Blood transfusions (a/k/a "blood doping"). Blood transfusions generally involve the extraction of an athlete's own blood pre-competition and reinfusion of that blood shortly before or during competition (e.g., in the evening or on a rest day in a multistage race) to increase the athlete's oxygen carrying red blood cells.

Testosterone Also known on the USPS and Discovery Channel cycling teams as "oil." Testosterone is an anabolic agent and can increase muscle mass and strength.

Human Growth Hormone (hGH) Human growth hormone is improperly used in sport to increase strength and lean muscle mass, to assist in weight loss and to promote recovery.

Corticosteroids (e.g., cortisone). These drugs reduce inflammation, assist in recovery and can provide a burst of energy and create a temporary feeling of increased energy and well-being.

Saline and plasma infusions. Throughout much of the relevant period the UCI employed a blood monitoring program and would not permit riders to compete if the rider's hematocrit (i.e. percentage of mature red blood cells) exceeded 50%. To avoid exceeding the 50% hematocrit threshold and to prevent detection of the rider's EPO use and/or blood transfusions, Respondents used the prohibited technique of saline, plasma or glycerol infusions...

USADA can request a hearing, and if they lose, they have the ability to appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, an international arbitration body.

Robert D. Luskin, a lawyer at Patton Boggs LLP, who is representing Mr. Armstrong, said the athlete has 10 days to make a written submission to USADA's antidoping review board. "The question is how meaningful that response will be," he said, adding that "USADA hasn't identified the witnesses or provided us with any background information on the so-called blood tests that in their view support blood doping."

Some of the alleged doping outlined in the letter happened more than eight years ago, which falls beyond the scope of the World Anti-Doping Association's statute of limitations.

In the letter, USADA says the statute doesn't apply because the co-conspirators made "false statements" and engaged in "fraudulent concealment or other wrongful conduct." If found to have committed doping violations, Mr. Armstrong could be stripped of all of his Tour de France victories.

Mr. Armstrong had been at the center of doping allegations, made in 2010 and 2011, by two ex-teammates, including Floyd Landis, who also rode with the now-defunct U.S. Postal Service team.

In May 2010, The Wall Street Journal uncovered emails sent by Mr. Landis, a former Tour de France winner, to cycling officials. In the emails, Mr. Landis described, in detail, systematic blood doping methods, including transfusions, on Mr. Armstrong's U.S. Postal team.



European Pressphoto Agency

Lance Armstrong in 2011.

In the emails, Mr. Landis said he saw Mr. Armstrong taking transfusions. That summer, the Journal published a lengthy account of the alleged doping on the Postal team in which Mr. Landis and others said they had seen Mr. Armstrong taking injections of boosted blood.

during the Tour de France.

Mr. Armstrong staunchly denied Mr. Landis's allegations.

Mr. Bruyneel, the manager of Mr. Armstrong's cycling teams, didn't respond to requests for comment on Wednesday. In a press conference in May 2010 after the publication of Mr. Landis's emails, which implicated Mr. Bruyneel in doping, Mr. Bruyneel said: "I absolutely deny everything he said."

Mr. Landis has filed a federal whistleblower suit alleging that the U.S. Postal Team defrauded the federal government by taking money from the sponsor in violation of a contract that prohibited doping.

Wednesday's doping charges follow an investigation by USADA into doping in cycling that lasted more than two years. Mr. Armstrong said the "charges are baseless, motivated by spite and advanced through testimony bought and paid for by promises of anonymity and immunity."

The World Triathlon Corporation said it had been notified that USADA initiated its case against Mr. Armstrong to determine if there is sufficient evidence of doping during his cycling career to bring forward charges. Its rules say an athlete is ineligible to compete during an open investigation. Mr. Armstrong "is therefore suspended" from competing in WTC races "pending further review," the WTC said in a statement.

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